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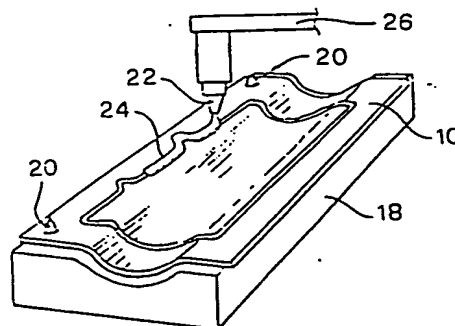
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(54) A process for manufacturing reinforced sealing gaskets, and gasket obtained by the process.

(57) The process provides for depositing, on a non-adhesive support (10), a thread (24) of a fluid material for gasket manufacture from a nozzle (22) that is displaced above the support along a path coinciding with the gasket layout, with subsequent curing of the fluid material. According to the invention, a stiff, wirelike reinforcement (16) is placed on the support (10) before deposition, the reinforcement corresponding in shape to the outline of the gasket that is to be manufactured, and having an adhesive surface with respect to the fluid material of the gasket, so that the subsequently deposited thread of fluid material incorporates the reinforcement and becomes bonded to it. The invention also relates to the product obtained by the process.



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.4)
A	CH-A- 480 571 (PLASTANA AG) * Whole document *	1-5,8	B 29 C 41/20 B 29 C 41/12 B 29 L 31/26
A	DE-A-2 613 794 (CONTINENTAL GUMMI-WERKE AG) * Whole document *	1-5,8	
A	US-A-3 288 667 (T.P. MARTIN) * Whole document *	1-5,8	
A	DE-A-2 936 396 (K. LENHARDT) * Whole document, in particular page 11, lines 19-23; page 12, lines 1-16 *	1-5,8	
A	CA-A- 962 416 (T.E. CLARKE) * Whole document *	1,9	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.4)
A	US-A-3 737 169 (FEDERAL-MOGUL CORP.) * Whole document *	1-5,8	B 05 C B 29 C B 29 D B 60 R F 16 J
A	FLUID POWER INTERNATIONAL, June 1973, pages 36,37; R.A. WALKER: "Printed seals and gaskets" * Whole document *	1-5,8	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 11-08-1987	Examiner GOURIER P.A.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date O : document cited in the application - : document cited for other reasons A : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. ⁴)
A	GB-A- 929 476 (FELT PRODUCTS MFG CO.) * Whole document * -----	1-5, 8, 9	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 4)
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
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- * : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category
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- D : prior disclosure
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- T : theory or principle underlying the invention
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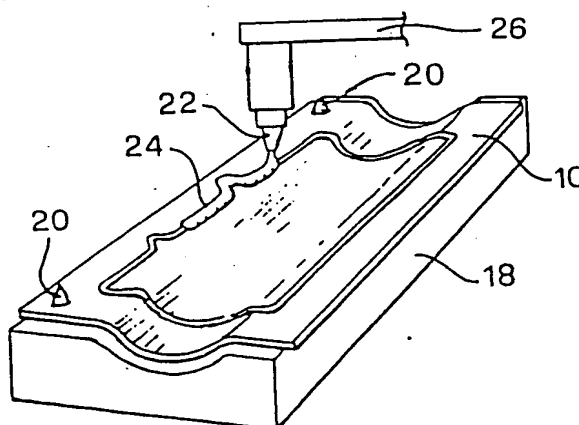
71 Applicant: TAKO S.p.A., via Reiss Romoli 122/8,
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54 A process for manufacturing reinforced sealing gaskets, and gasket obtained by the process.

57 The process provides for depositing, on a non-adhesive support (10), a thread (24) of a fluid material for gasket manufacture from a nozzle (22) that is displaced above the support along a path coinciding with the gasket layout, with subsequent curing of the fluid material. According to the invention, a stiff, wirelike reinforcement (16) is placed on the support (10) before deposition, the reinforcement corresponding in shape to the outline of the gasket that is to be manufactured, and having an adhesive surface with respect to the fluid material to the gasket, so that the subsequently deposited thread of fluid material incorporates the reinforcement and becomes bonded to it. The invention also relates to the product obtained by the process.



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A process for manufacturing reinforced sealing gaskets, and gasket
obtained by the process

This invention relates to a process for manufacturing reinforced sealing gaskets, by depositing elastomeric polymers and the like, while in the fluid state, and subsequently curing them. The invention also relates to the product obtained by such process.

5

Planar gaskets made by depositing and then curing a thread of a fluid elastomer or other polymer onto a non-adhesive support and then removing the cured thread for use as a gasket have been known for some time. Moreover, in the copending Eur. Pat. Appln. for "A
10 process for manufacturing sealing gaskets, and gasket obtained by the process", claiming priority of It. Pat. Appln. No. 67974-A/84, the Applicant has proposed a technique of deposition of a fluid material by which non-planar gaskets can be economically obtained.

15 A technique of assembly has become recently widespread, particularly in the automobile industry, whereby, for sealing statically coupled surfaces, the conventional gasket is replaced with a thread of an elastomer which is directly deposited, while in the fluid state, onto the surface of the part, the elastomer being
20 subsequently cured so that it becomes bonded to the surface. Deposition is made from a nozzle that is displaced by numerically controlled manipulators capable of moving along two or three coordinates.

25 The above technique dispenses with the fixed costs of the molds or dies required for the manufacture of conventional gaskets made by punching or injection-molding, while the quality is kept at a level equal or superior to the quality obtainable with a conventional gasket. In particular, such method of assembly is especial-

ly advantageous with non-planar layouts, because it then replaces a gasket that otherwise would have to be made by injection-molding, and therefore inherently expensive.

- 5 However, such method of direct deposition on the part during assembly is not free from practical drawbacks. If the deposition station breaks down, it is not always possible to substitute ready-made gaskets, as these may not yet be available commercially. Even when nozzle-deposited spare gaskets are available,
10 these are soft and supple, and therefore not adapted to be manipulated by robots. If the gasket has a planar outline, it may be possible to use punched reinforced gaskets, which are stiff and relatively cheap. However, in the case of non-planar gaskets, where direct deposition affords its best usefulness, manufacturers,
15 in order to avoid the shutdown of the entire assembly line, have to provide expensive emergency equipment, which defeats to a large extent the saving inherent in direct deposition.

Another drawback of nozzle-deposited gaskets is that, because of
20 their high compliance, they will run out and even be disintegrated if subjected to strong pressure. Their degree of compliance can be adjusted only to a limited extent, because of the inherent softness of the materials used, such as silicones and polyurethanes. As a consequence of this shortcoming, nozzle-deposited gaskets
25 have been kept away from many applications where their low cost and easy adaptability would otherwise make them attractive.

Therefore, it is the main object of the invention to provide a process for making gaskets by depositing fluid material from a
30 nozzle, by which a good shape stability is achieved, while keeping down manufacturing costs, without a need for expensive investment in tools. More particularly, the object of the invention is to

allow for manufacturing reinforced sealing gaskets that can also be installed by conventional robots in original equipment, as an alternative to direct deposition.

- 5 Another object of the invention is to provide a method for making reinforced sealing gaskets by nozzle-deposition of a fluid material, in which the reinforcement can act as a spacer between the coupled surfaces, thus preventing running out or tearing of the gasket under pressure.

10

A further object of the invention is to provide reinforced gaskets obtained by deposition of fluid material, such that manual installation of spares is also expedited.

- 15 Such objects are achieved by the invention, together with other objects and advantages such as will appear from the following specification, with a process for making reinforced sealing gaskets, wherein a thread of a fluid material for gasket manufacture is deposited, on a non-adhesive support, from a nozzle that
- 20 is displaced above the support along a trajectory corresponding to the outline of the gasket, with subsequent curing of the fluid material, characterized in that it comprises the following steps:

a) preparing a support so that its surface contains the outline of the gasket to be made;

- 25 b) preparing a wirelike reinforcement having an outline corresponding to the outline of the gasket to be manufactured and having an adhesive surface with respect to said fluid material;

c) positioning the support and the reinforcement with respect to the nozzle, so that the reinforcement is everywhere adjacent to

- 30 the support surface;

d) deposit a thread of fluid material from the nozzle while displacing the nozzle at a fixed distance over and along the rein-

forcement so that the fluid material, on subsequent curing, incorporates the reinforcement and becomes bonded to it.

Preferred embodiments of invention, given by way of non-limiting
5 examples, will now be described with reference to the attached drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a prospective view of a gasket support used in carrying out the invention;

10

Fig. 2 is a prospective view of a reinforcement used in carrying out the invention;

Fig. 3 is a view of the deposition step of a thread of fluid material onto the support of Fig. 1, by using the reinforcement of
15 Fig. 2, according to the inventive process;

Fig. 4 is a transversal cross-section view, on an enlarged scale, of a first example of a gasket according to the invention,
20 sticking to the support;

Fig. 5 is a transversal cross-section view, on an enlarged scale, of a second example of a gasket according to the invention, sticking to the support.

25

With reference to Fig. 1, according to the invention a support 10 is prepared, of PVC sheet or other suitable material, provided with register means such as holes 12, and having a surface containing the outline of the gasket that is to be manufactured. In
30 the example of Fig. 1, the support is hot-pressed from a thermoplastic sheet so that its shape corresponds to the outline of a gasket extending in three dimensions, according to the teachings

of said copending European Patent Application in the Applicant's name. Where the gasket outline is planar, the support will be substantially flat.

- 5 Preferably, support 10 is molded with rises 14 (not shown for clarity in Fig. 1, but visible in Fig. 4), defining a groove having the same layout as the gasket, for purposes that will appear in the following. The support is then made non-adhesive with respect to the material of the gasket, by techniques known per se,
10 and that it is therefore not necessary to describe.

Separately, a metal reinforcement 16 is made, shown in Fig. 2, consisting in a wirelike, rigid core having the outline of the desired gasket, and it is rendered adhesive to the material of the
15 gasket, unless it already has inherent adhesivity. The reinforcement is preferably made from stiff metal wire, by means of known wire-bending machines, although it can also be made of punched metal sheet or by other desired means. Depending on whether the gasket extends over two or three dimensions, the reinforcement 16,
20 as well as support 10, has a planar or a non-planar outline.

The cross-section of core 16 is preferably round, although it can be square, flat, and with a knurled or rough surface, in order to improve the adhesion to the material of the gasket, as will appear
25 in the sequel.

With particular reference to Fig. 3, support 10 is now placed on a stand 18 provided with reference dowels 20, adapted to engage the holes 12 of the support in order to align it with a nozzle 22
30 carried by a manipulator or robot 26; and reinforcement 16 is then placed on support 10, in register with the desired outline of deposition of fluid material, the references afforded by rises 14

being used to this purpose. Manipulator 26 should be capable of movement along two or three coordinates, depending as the gasket is planar or three-dimensional, and should be capable of being controlled to follow a trajectory corresponding to the outline of the gasket, by techniques known per se.

A thread 24 of a fluid elastomer is now deposited along the outline of reinforcement 16 by means of said nozzle 22, the above manipulator being controlled by a control device, such as a suitably programmed, microprocessor-based device (not shown). The fluid material surrounds the reinforcement and is bonded to it during the subsequent curing, thus incorporating it into an integral structure, having the properties of elasticity and compliance that are peculiar of this kind of gaskets, while also having a stability of shape due to the metal core, even after removing the gasket from its support. The gasket can therefore be robot-installed in the assembly line, because its stiffness allows it to be moved without intricate manipulations. For the same reasons, the gasket so obtained is also easier and quicker to install for a human operator.

Preferably, the support sheet will be supported, during deposition, on a stand having a perforated upper surface matching the shape of the support sheet and connected to a vacuum source for holding the support flat and stationary by depression, as described and shown in the above copending European Patent Application by the same Applicant.

Moreover, the flow of fluid polymer deposited by nozzle 22 can be modulated along its path, in order to obtain accurately defined gaskets, whose thickness is everywhere adequate to the pressures that are to be withstood.

The gasket thus obtained will usually be marketed together with its support, so that it suffers no distortions during prolonged storage, and the end user will peel it off its support at the time of use. To such an end the support, in order to make peeling easy
5 without misshaping the metal core, is preferably made of a pliable material.

Fig. 5 shows a second embodiment of a gasket according to the invention, in which support 10 has a ridge 28 coinciding with the
10 gasket's outline, and the reinforcement consists in a metal strap 30, instead of a wire having a round cross-section. With this embodiment the fluid polymer is more certain to properly incorporate the reinforcement everywhere, pervading the lateral gaps between the support and the reinforcement. In this case, instead of the
15 continuous rises 14 of Fig. 4, which define a groove or channel for positioning reinforcement 16 and the completed gasket, separate projections 32 are provided for positioning the reinforcement, spaced along the path.

20 Materials suitable for use as fluid materials for the gasket are those already known in the manufacture of planar gaskets by nozzle deposition, such as silicone materials, polyurethane materials, or even PVC, with or without added catalizer, the materials being monocomponent or bicomponent, and adapted to be hot-cured or cured
25 at ambient temperature. In general, any kind of elastomeric material can be used, or in some cases also other synthetic resins.

Although a few preferred embodiments of the invention have been described, these can be changed or modified with equivalent means,
30 within the teachings of the invention, without departing from its scope.

Claims

1. A process for manufacturing reinforced sealing gaskets, wherein a thread (24) of a fluid material for gasket manufacture is deposited, on a non-adhesive support (10), from a nozzle (22) that is displaced above the support along a trajectory corresponding to the outline of the gasket, with subsequent curing of the fluid material, characterized in that it comprises the following steps:
 - a) preparing a support so that its surface contains the outline of the gasket to be made;
 - b) preparing a wirelike reinforcement (16) having an outline corresponding to the outline of the gasket to be manufactured and having an adhesive surface with respect to said fluid material;
 - c) positioning the support and the reinforcement with respect to the nozzle, so that the reinforcement is everywhere adjacent to the support surface;
 - d) deposit a thread of fluid material from the nozzle while displacing the nozzle at a fixed distance over and along the reinforcement so that the fluid material, on subsequent curing, incorporates the reinforcement and becomes bonded to it.
2. The process of claim 1, characterized in that the fluid material is a monocomponent polymer.
3. The process of claim 1, characterized in that the fluid material is a bicomponent polymer.
4. The process of claim 1, characterized in that the fluid material is chosen from one of the following: silicones, polyurethanes, PVC.

5. The process of claim 1, characterized in that the reinforcement is metal wire bent in the shape of the gasket outline.

6. The process of claim 1, characterized in that the gasket support has ridges (14) defining a groove or depression along the outline of the gasket, adapted to receive the reinforcement.

7. The process of claim 1, characterized in that the gasket support has projections (32) along the outline of the gasket, adapted to act as positioning seats for the reinforcement.

8. A reinforced gasket made by the process of claim 1, characterized in that it comprises a thread (24) of cured, nozzle-deposited polymer, incorporating a stiff, wirelike reinforcement (16) extending at least partly within the thread.

9. A product characterized in that it comprises the gasket of claim 8, weakly adhering to the support sheet (10).

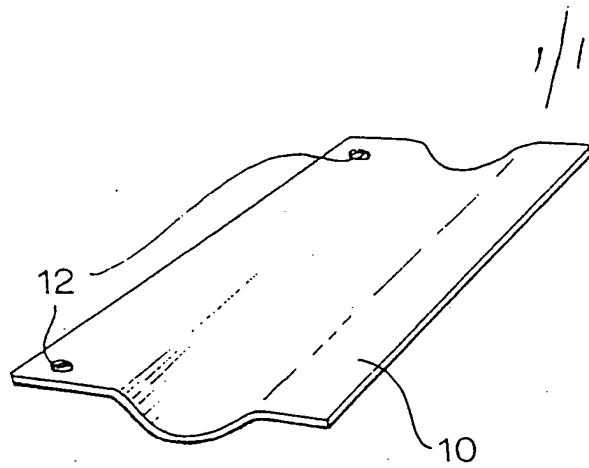


Fig. 1

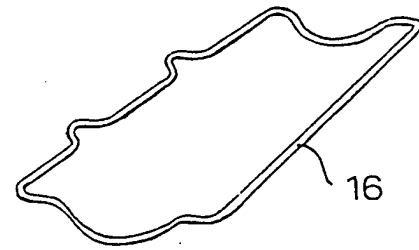


Fig. 2

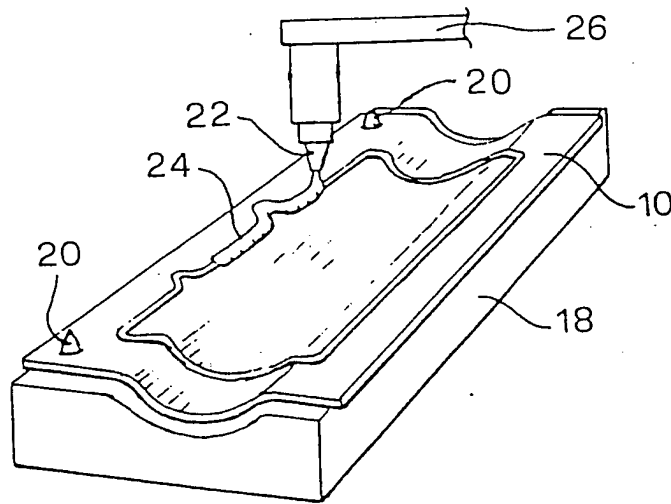


Fig. 3

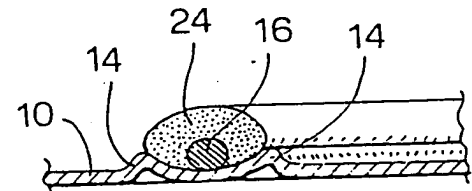


Fig. 4

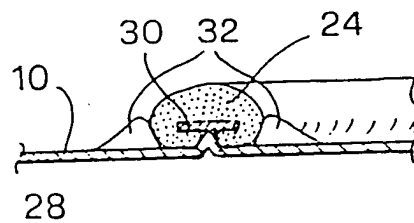


Fig. 5